2

MORALITY *and* RELIGION *essential to* SOCIETY.

A

SERMON

PREACHED at the

ASSIZES

HELD AT

LEICESTER,

On *Thursday, August* 12. 1756.

BY

RALPH HEATHCOTE A.M.

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MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

TO

WILLIAM POCHIN

Of *BARKBY* Eſquire,

HIGH SHERIFF of the
County of *LEICESTER*;

AND TO

The GENTLEMEN of the

GRAND JURY,

This SERMON,

Publiſhed at Their Requeſt,

Is Inſcribed,

By their obedient humble Servant,

The PREACHER.

MICAH VI. 8.

What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do juſtly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

THE primary deſign of the Law of *Moſes* was to redeem a ſelect People from Idolatry and Superſtition, and to preſerve them in the worſhip of the ONE GOD only. All the Statutes and Ordinances, all the Rites and Ceremonies, with which that Diſpenſation may ſeem to be incumbered, tend uniformly to eſtabliſh this firſt and great Principle of Natural Religion: either by inculcating the Doctrine of the Unity *directly**; or by being oppoſed to thoſe idolatrous Modes of Worſhip, under which it was diſguiſed, and

* The Law may be ſaid to inculcate the doctrine of the Unity *directly, quatenus ritus quoſdam, veluti ſigna & notas, inſtituit, quorum uſu Judæi ſe populum Deo vero ſeparatum eſſe, & ſacra ſua omnia in illius honorem perficere, ſignificarent.* SPENCER. de Legib. Hebræor. Lib. I. c. v.

and miſerably corrupted; or laſtly, by being adapted with ſuch peculiar oeconomy, that, though uſed of old in the ſervice of Falſe Gods, they might now be employed in the ſervice of the True God *.

Such, however, was the groſſneſs and ſenſuality of the *Jews*, that they abſurdly miſtook the Means for the End. The End of the *Moſaic* Inſtitution was, Righteouſneſs and Morality; the Means to promote it, Statutes and Ordinances. Theſe the Jewiſh people were perpetually confounding. They ſtopped at the Means, without purſuing the End: They acquieſced in obſerving the Ritual, as if this was to fulfil all which the Law required; and neglected that inward and real Holineſs, that purity of Life and Manners, for the attainment of which this Ritual was eſtabliſhed.

But this was an open abuſe and manifeſt perverſion of the Law; and, therefore, a ſucceſſion of Prophets was raiſed up, whoſe chief

* — *Ritus aliquos*, ſays SPENCER, *longo uſu receptos reformando, eoſque ad Dei ipſius cultum transformando: — ritus enim haud paucos antiquitus uſitatos in novam quaſi formam finxit Deus, ut plebis animos, quos ratio non potuit, uſus aut divina συγκαταβασις cultui ſuo conciliaret.* Ibid. Lib. I. c. xiii.

chief office was to remonſtrate againſt it; to direct the Law to its Original intention; to draw the *Jews* off from their carnal attachment to Rites and Ceremonies; and to fix their hearts upon the true ſpiritual objects of all religious ſervice. Thus ſaith God by the Prophet *Samuel: Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and ſacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold! to obey, is better than ſacrifice, and to hearken, than the fat of rams.* 1 Sam. xv. 22. By the Prophet *Iſaiah: To what purpoſe is the multitude of your ſacrifices unto me, ſaith the Lord?—But waſh ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, ceaſe to do evil, learn to do well, ſeek judgment, relieve the oppreſſed, judge the fatherleſs, plead for the widow.* Iſai. i. 11, 16, 17. And, laſtly, by the Prophet *Micah: Will the Lord be pleaſed with thouſands of rams, or with ten thouſands of rivers of oil?—He hath ſhewed thee, O man, what is good: And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do juſtly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* Mic. vi. 7, 8.

Which words—though they may ſeem, at the firſt, to be detached Precepts only, thrown together by the Prophet, without order or deſign—will yet be found to exhibit an exact

act and regular Plan, and to contain even a ſummary of Religious and Civil Duty. And this will appear, upon viewing them more attentively; when we ſhall ſoon diſcern the propriety of arrangement, allotted to each Precept, as well as the connexion and dependence, which they have on one another.

I. The Prophet enjoins, in the firſt place, to *do juſtly*; and, indeed, with great reaſon; juſtice being the Baſis of all ſocial Virtue, and the very Corner-ſtone, on which Society is built. There are, it is well known, various rights and privileges, that all men have a claim to: ſome of which they have by Nature; others they derive from Legal Inſtitutions; and others again, from mutual Compact and Agreement. Now as long as we do not encroach or break in upon theſe rights, but ſuffer every man freely to poſſeſs and enjoy, whatever he may challenge by virtue of any of them, ſo long, and no longer, we may be ſaid to *do juſtly*.

This, then, is Juſtice; and it is of the Nature and Eſſence of Society. Society muſt not only be deemed unhappy without it, but it muſt even ceaſe to be Society. In proportion as men neglect the obſervance of this Virtue,

Virtue, ſo far they fall from Civil life back into a State of Nature. Thus, when, inſtead of *doing juſtly* by aſſigning to every man his due, they abandon themſelves to Fraud and Oppreſſion: when they lie in wait to overreach all they have to do with; when they are carried, as they often are, to the enormities of Rapine, Theft, and Murder; then they are called the Peſts and the Bane of Society. And they are called ſo very truly: for they do not barely injure, but, as far as in them lies, actually diſſolve Society, by diſſolving the only tie, which can hold men together. Nor, were ſuch injuſtice to prevail univerſally, (and, alas! it prevails too much) could it poſſibly be otherwiſe, but that all mutual intercourſe would intirely be at an end; and that men would find it more eligible to break up, and to retire into ſolitude, than to ſupport themſelves thus, like beaſts of prey, by for ever aſſaulting and deſpoiling each other *. We need not, therefore, dwell upon the neceſſity of Juſtice to Society; it being evident, that Society cannot even exiſt, where a ſavage violation of Juſtice is predominant.

* Scott's *Chriſtian Life*, P. I. C. 3. S. 3. §. 2.

II. But, although to *do juſtly* is neceſſary to the Being, yet it will not, of itſelf, ſuffice to the Well-being of Society. Society, it is true, may ſubſiſt with Juſtice, but it will not be Happy with It *alone*. For Juſtice carries ſomething ſevere in its Nature; and, if exerciſed too rigorouſly, would often be found, in the complexity of Human affairs, even to border upon Injuſtice. On which account the Prophet hath wiſely directed, in the ſecond place, to *love mercy*; that is, to temper the ſeverity of Juſtice with the ſoftneſs of Mercy.

The Scriptures frequently join theſe Virtues together; and indeed, if it be conſidered, they cannot well ſubſiſt aſunder. For Mercy without Juſtice has no exiſtence at all: and Juſtice without Mercy would gradually abound with bitterneſs; would be moroſe, intractable, unſociable, and degenerating, where it could, into Tyranny and Oppreſſion. Hence we are bidden, not only to *execute judgement*, or juſtice, but likewiſe to *ſhew mercy and compaſſion*. Zechar. vii. 9. And they, who fail to do this, are deſcribed as *turning judgement into wormwood, and leaving*

ing off righteouſneſs * or mercy *in the Earth:* upon whom it is denounced, that they *ſhall have judgement without mercy, becauſe they have ſhewn no mercy.* Amos v. 7. James ii. 13.

The Mercy, recommended here under the Law, exactly correſponds with the Univerſal Benevolence or Charity of the Goſpel; by which we are taught to be gentle, meek, patient, and merciful in all our dealings: that we be not *extreme to mark what is done amiſs*, although againſt ourſelves; that, inſtead of avenging, even where Juſtice may ſeem to warrant it, we rather paſs by and pardon, offences; in a word, that we be not rigid and inflexible, but always ready to comply, and to remit even ſomething from our right, when private ſecurity or the public weal are not hurt or endangered by it.

But we are not to ſtop here: we muſt not remain ſatisfied with offices of forbearance, which are only a kind of negative duty, towards our neighbour; but we muſt ſerve him likewiſe by an actual and poſitive beneficence. Thus we learn from the ſame Scriptures, that it is as ſtrictly our duty to do

* δικαιοσυνην. Vid. HAMMOND. & CLERIC. in *Matth.* i. 19.

good to others, as not to injure them; to ſupply their wants, as not to rob them; *to reach forth a hand to help them*, as *not to ſmite them with the fiſt of wickedneſs*. Prov. xxxi.20. Iſaiah lviii.4. Juſtice may perhaps ſuggeſt, that our goods and poſſeſſions are Ours, wholly and intirely Ours, and what nothing but violence can ſeparate from us; yet Mercy commandeth, that we ſhut not up our bowels and our hands againſt the diſtreſſes of our Brethren. And although there lies no action againſt a want of Mercy, though the Miſer cannot be impleaded for denying alms to the poor, yet the Laws of God and Nature will cry out loudly againſt him, if he diſtribute not, according to his abilities, among all that ſtand in need.

Thus on theſe two Virtues jointly, which conſtitute our *Civil* duty, the great ſtructure of ſociety is raiſed and upheld. Juſtice, the more Uſeful, eſtabliſhes the Foundation, and links together the Parts: Mercy, the more Amiable, ſmoothens, adorns, and finiſhes the Whole. On theſe, then, its very Being as well as Happineſs intirely depends; ſo that nothing now remains, but to ſecure a due and regular obſervance of them. For,

although

although an Intelligent and Rational Creature, like Man, may eaſily diſcern the neceſſity of conforming to ſuch a Rule of acting, as Juſtice and Mercy here preſcribe, yet there are other Ingredients in his Make, beſides Intelligence and Reaſon: there are Paſſions of various kinds, ſuch as Ambition, Avarice, and the like, which would often be too ſtrong for Intelligence and Reaſon, and hurry him, againſt Conviction, to ſwerve from this Rule. ——

That Juſtice and Mercy are Virtues neceſſary to Society, is, I ſay, a Truth, which may eaſily determine our Underſtandings, but it will not ſo eaſily determine our Wills. It may ſubdue and conquer our Reaſon, but it will not, of itſelf, ſubdue and conquer our Appetites and Paſſions. Hence the want of ſome ſtronger principle, founded in the Authority of a Superior, to controll and reſtrain their violence; ſome ſanction, to enforce the practice of Juſtice and Mercy. — Now this principle or ſanction being nothing but the power of Religion,

III. The Prophet therefore exhorts, in the laſt place, *to walk humbly with God:* and this compre-

comprehends our *Religious* duty. *He, that cometh to God,* ſays the Apoſtle, *muſt believe that He is, and that He — will render to every man according to his deeds.* Hebrews xi.6. Rom. ii. 6. And as *coming to God* is uſed in Scripture for entering upon a Religious courſe, ſo *walking with God* is uſed for perſevering in the ſame.

To perceive the neceſſity of *Religious* for the enforcement of *Civil* duty, we need but conſider, how the latter would be ſupported without aid of the former. And here we ſhall ſoon find, that it would have either no ſupport at all, or at leaſt a very precarious and uncertain one. For, were Religion excluded, the only ties, which would remain to preſerve Juſtice and Mercy, are, firſt, the written Laws of Men, and, ſecondly, the unwritten Laws of Reaſon and Conſcience. The written Laws of Men, to compel to Juſtice; the unwritten Laws of Reaſon and Conſcience, to perſuade to Mercy.

1. Now written Law, when contrived with the greateſt wiſdom, can only extend to the outſide of things, and to the correction of ſuch miſdemeanors, as fall under the cogni-

zance

zance and teſtimony of men. It may indeed, for the moſt part, reſtrain from Rapine, Murder, Rebellion, and other atrocious crimes, which are injurious to Government and Commercial life: but this is all it can do: and how far this fails of making men Juſt, may be learnt from that multifarious iniquity, which does not fall within the Letter of the Law *.

And the reaſon of this incapacity is obvious enough. Written Law, however comprehenſive and extended, muſt, by its very Nature, be ſimple and uniform. Human affairs, on the contrary, are almoſt infinitely various; and the combinations of caſes, reſulting from thence, will be likewiſe as various. Written Law, therefore, cannot reach to many Particulars; but muſt, in a great meaſure, be confined to Univerſals. — And hence, we know, the expediency of EQUITY; to correct thoſe falſe and unequal meaſures, which would often flow from the Univerſality of LAW †. — But from this Univer-

* *Quam anguſta innocentia eſt, ad legem bonum eſſe? quanto latius officiorum patet, quam juris regula? quam multa pietas, humanitas, liberalitas, juſtitia, fides exigunt, quæ omnia extra publicas tabulas ſunt?* SENEC. de Ira, L. ii. c. 27.

† ἡ ἐστιν αὐλη ἡ φυσις ἡ τȣ ἐπιεικȣς. ἐπανορθωμα νομȣ, ἡ ἐλλειπει δια το καθολȣ. ARISTOT. de Mor. L. V. c. 14.

Æquitas

Univerſality great inconveniencies and miſchiefs ariſe: Diſtinctions are formed, Subtleties invented, and the Laws evaded by men offending againſt the *Spirit* of them, becauſe ſuch offences are not compriſed, as we term it, *within the Letter*.

2. Nor, it is to be feared, will the Unwritten Laws of Reaſon and Conſcience make up the Defects in Written Laws. Experience leaves no room to conclude, that they will. Reaſon, of itſelf, is an unactive and merely ſpeculativePrinciple; and though, as I have obſerved, it may inform the Underſtanding, yet it will have no power to regulate the Will: while Paſſion, almoſt always, would gain the aſcendant, and bear at once the whole man before it. And for that inſtinctive approbation of right, and abhorrence of wrong, which is uſually meant by Conſcience — though it may ſometimes quicken to Virtue, and retard from Vice, yet, in general, how corrupted with prejudice, how ſtifled by paſſion! A few, indeed, of finer

Æquitas eſt correctrix ejus, in quo Lex propter Univerſalitatem deficit. — Cum enim inæqualibus idem non poſſit eſſe æquale, res autem ſæpe ſunt inæquales, lex vero una ſemper atque eadem; neceſſario conſequitur, alia virtute opus eſſe, quæ inæqualibus rebus ſuam cuique æqualitatem præſtet. GROTIUS de Jure, &c. p.940. *Amſt.* 1712.

finer temperatures and gentler appetites it may, and does, influence: yet with them it is but feeble, and, with the groſs of mankind, ſeemingly extinct.

But whatever may be wanting, either in the Laws of Men, or in the Laws of Reaſon and Conſcience, to make us *Juſt* and *Merciful*, is abundantly ſupplied by the Laws of God; by which all will be reſtrained, who *walk humbly* with him. For theſe, far from being limited, like Human Laws, to what only regards the Body, reach to the very inmoſt receſſes of the Soul: and by their ſanctions are fitted to withhold us, not barely from ſuch Crimes, as would render us obnoxious to Civil Judgement and *Outward* Tribunals, but from every the leaſt Impurity, which can ſtain and deform us *Within*. They cenſure not only our Actions, but even our Wills; not only our fouleſt miſdemeanors, but the very thoughts, which give them birth.

Thus the Plan, laid down by the Prophet in my Text, becomes intire and compleat. *To do juſtly and to love mercy*, includes our *Civil* Duty: *to walk humbly with God*, includes

our *Religious*. Morality and Religion, then, appear to be the great foundation and ſafeguard of Society: and they are *equally* neceſſary to ſupport and protect it, becauſe *equally* neceſſary to ſupport and protect each other.

1. I have obſerved more than once, that Morality cannot ſubſiſt without the ſanctions of Religion. Unguarded by theſe, it will always be expoſed to ſure and certain deſtruction; for it will always be found, that Man, neither excited by Hope, nor reſtrained by Fear, will naturally give himſelf up to *Deſire* *, — to whatever ſhall gratify the preſent Inclination. Reaſon, we allow, may teach him what is fitting, and Conſcience, ſometimes, prevail with him to purſue it; but, for the moſt part, he will follow, where Appetite leads, and indulge the Ruling Paſſion, how irregular ſoever it may happen to be.

2. Nor can Religion, on the other hand, ſubſiſt without Morality. It is not poſſible to conceive, how it ſhould: for it has, indeed, no real exiſtence in ſuch a ſeparate ſtate.

* Φρονημα σαρκος.

ſtate. All true Religion, whatever Bigotry or Superſtition may ſuggeſt to the contrary, muſt have Moral Virtue for its baſis and ſupport: ſo that to think of maintaining the former independently of the latter, is to project a ſuperſtructure without laying a foundation.

But the folly of ſeparating Morality and Religion, and the inconveniencies, which attend ſo unnatural a procedure, may in ſome meaſure be exemplified, by what is now paſſing in our own age and nation. For it happens unluckily, that we have at this time two conſiderable Parties amongſt us, who are ſhamefully guilty of the ſeparation, complained of: who eſpouſe Morality to a contempt of Religion, and who eſpouſe Religion to a contempt of Morality. Under the former, may be comprehended the greater part of thoſe, who diſbelieve the Truth of Revealed Religion: under the latter, Enthuſiaſts and Fanatics of every Denomination.

1. Now the miſchiefs, done to Society by both theſe tribes, are alike fatal and deſtructive of its Being. They, who deſpiſe Religion, however they may *in Words* extol Mo-

rality, do, as we have ſeen, *in Deed* ſubvert it. For, by depriving it of that, which is its only ſecurity, they render it often ineffectual, but always precarious. Hence, are not the men of this caſt governed, upon the whole, by the unrulineſs of Paſſion? Do they, who have no Senſe of Religion, who may truly be ſaid to live without God in the world, in any manner act up to the Morality, they contend for? Are they not rather, as St *Paul* deſcribes them, *without natural affection, covenant-breakers, implacable, unmerciful; given to unrighteouſneſs, covetouſneſs, maliciouſneſs; full of envy, pride, deceit and murder?* Rom. i. 29, *&c.* It muſt be confeſſed, they are; and it is a certain truth, that Society, compoſed of ſuch members only, would immediately revert into a State of Nature.

2. No leſs injurious to the Body Social are Enthuſiaſts and Fanatics, who degrade Morality to do honor to Religion. For ſuch, though they may not formally condemn *Juſtice, Mercy*, and other Moral Virtues, do yet hold them exceedingly low, and eſteem them as little better than pardonable Vices. The calm ſober-minded Chriſtian is wont to conſider Religion, as chiefly uſeful to enforce Morality;

Morality; but the warm intoxicated Devotee inverts this Natural order of things, and only regards Morality, as it promotes Religion. From whence it comes to paſs, that the Religioniſt is uſually ſo fixed upon the things above, that he is apt to overlook the things below; and ſo taken up with his Duty towards God, as ſometimes to forget his Duty towards his Neighbour.

But the bare neglect of Morality, miſchievous as it is, is yet not *all* the miſchief, that the Religioniſt brings upon Social Life. For the exerciſe of Moral Virtue being inſeparable from the culture of Reaſon and Common Senſe, they are always either embraced, or rejected, together. Thus the Viſionary, who diſcards Morality as little elſe than ſinful practice, is ſure to diſcard Reaſon as a *very* ſinful principle. But experience has ever ſhewn, that, the moment a man quits Reaſon, he becomes a Prey to Fanaticiſm. Then every conceit, which a wild and diſordered imagination can ſuggeſt, is the fruits of the Holy Spirit; is, infallibly, pure Religion; and pure Religion, being the cauſe of God, muſt be maintained and propagated at all adventures. For This — the Religioniſt will (as he has

has ever done) grow noiſy, turbulent, and ſeditious: will not ſcruple, when it is in his power, to overturn Government, and lay whole kingdoms waſte: will break through all the bonds of *Juſtice*, remain inexorable to the cries of *Mercy*, and, under the Deluſion of ſerving God, count it Glory to deſtroy his Creatures*. Here Society, we ſee, will be demoliſhed to its foundations; and men as effectually forced into a State of Nature by Religion without Morality, as they were, in the former caſe, by Morality without Religion.

In a word, Society can no more be ſupported without Morality, than it can without Religion; becauſe neither of theſe can be ſupported, but in conjunction with the other. All ſeparation from each other will end, ſooner or later, in the ruin of both: and, therefore, the good citizen as well as the good man will make it his buſineſs to cultivate them together. He will be careful *to do juſtly, and to love mercy*; but he will be as careful *to walk humbly with God.* He will not affect an adoration of the Creator to the neglect of his Laws; nor pretend ſo ſcrupulous

* *The time cometh, that whoever killeth you, will think that he doth God ſervice.* John xvi. 2.

pulous an attachment to his Laws, as to neglect the Creator. Morality and Religion he ſees united providentially for a great and important purpoſe; he will, therefore, hold it impious to diſunite them, upon any pretence whatever. There are many Topics, which will diſpoſe him to *Juſtice* and *Mercy* towards Man; and there are as many, which will excite in him Praiſe, and Thanksgiving, and *Humility* towards God. Theſe he will apply, all in their full force, without affecting to ſlight either the one or the other: thus promoting, as much as in him lies, peace and good order among the Society of Men upon Earth, and thus preparing himſelf, in the moſt effectual manner, for the bleſſed Society of Saints and Angels in Heaven.

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